

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /031 W

----- 128519

R 170510Z JAN 74

FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9287

INFO AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USLO PEKING

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 HONG KONG 667

EXDIS*

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TW, CH, UR, US

SUBJECT: SOV INTEREST IN TAIWAN, TAIWAN INTEREF IN SOVS

REF: A. TAIPEI 35 B. MOSCOW 45 DEPT 9244

SUMMARY. THE SOVIETS ARE POSSIBLY JUST EXPLORING PRESSURE POINTS FOR USE IN COMPLICATING PEKING'S DECISION- MAKING; HOWEVER, IN VIEW OF THE MORE SERIOUS RAMIFICATIONS OF GRC-SOVIET MANEUVERS, WE AGGE WITH TAIPEI AND THE DEPARTMENT THAT THE US SHOULD AVOID ANY SUGGESTION THAT WE WOULD ACQUIESCE IN ESTABLISHMENT OF OFFICIAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE USSR AND TAIPEI, OR THAT WE WOULD EVER CONTEMPLATE SHARING WITH THE SOVIETS OUR FORMAL DEFENSE COMMITMENT (WE SHOULD ALSO, ON THE OTHER HAND, AVOID SEEMING TO ACCEPT ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR PREVENTING THE USSR FROM ASSUMING A UNILATERAL ROLE IN THE "DEFENSE" OF TAIWNA). SUBJECT TO THESE CAVEATS, TAIPEI'S SOVIET OPTION HAS ITS GOOD SIDE. IT MAKES PEKING LESS LIKELY TO DEMAND ABROGATION OF THE U.S. COMMITMENT TO TAIPEI, FOR FEAR OF PUSHING TAIPEI IN THE DIRECTION OF THE SOVIETS. THE SAME FEAR MIGHT EVEN CONCEIVABLY MAKE PEKING WARY OF ACCEPTING FULL DIPLOMATIC RECOGNITION OF THE U.S., THOUGH I DOUBT IT. ON THE CONTRARY,

THE DYNAMICS OF TAIPEI'S SOVIET OPTION SEEM TO ME TO STRENGTHEN THE CASE FOR PROCEEDING WITH ALL DELIBERATE SPEADP000

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ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /031 W

----- 128317

R 170510Z JAN 74
FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9288
INFO AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USLO PEKING

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 HONG KONG 667

EXDIS

6. THE PASSAGE THROUGH THE TAIWAN STRAIT LAST SPRING OF A SOVIET FLOTILLA REMINDED PEKING THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE THE MILITARY CAPABILITY TO INTERFERE WITH AN ATTEMPT BY THE PRC TO LIBERATE TAIWAN BY FORCE, WITH OR WITHOUT THE COLLABORATION OR CONSENT OF TAIPEI. EVEN ACTING UNILATERALLY, HOWEVER, THE SOVIETS MUST BE AWARE OF THE RISK THEY RUN, IN PARADING THEIR POWER TO INTERVENE MILITARILY, OF GETTING FROZEN INTO A POSITION VIS-A-VIS TAIWAN THAT COULD BE ABANDONED ONLY WITH CONSIDERABLE LOSS OF FACE. AS THE TIME OF SUCCESSION APPROACHES IN PEKING, MOSCOW WOULD NOT WANT TO LOSE THE FLEXIBILITY IT MUST HAVE IF IT IS TO SEIZE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DETENTE WITH POST-MAO CHINA. UNLESS THE SOVIETS HAVE WRITTEN OFF THE POSSIBILITY OF SATISFACTORY RELATIONS WITH PEKING, TAIWAN IS AND MUST REMAIN A SUBORDINATE MATTER.

7. UNITED STATES INTERESTS WOULD PROBABLY BE DAMAGED BY TAIPEI'S ACTUAL EXERCISE OF ITS "SOVIET OPTION", WHETHER IN THE FORM OF A SOVIET "LIAISON OFFICE" OR A SOVIET DEFENSE COMMITMENT, BUT THE DAMAGE WOULD BE FAR MORE SEVERE IN THE LATTER CASE. IF THE GRC WERE, CONTRARY TO CURRENT EXPECTATIONS AND TO THE RATIONALE SET FORTH ABOVE, TO ACCEPT SOVIET OVERTURES FOR THE OPENING OF OFFICIAL RELATIONS (WITHOUT DEFENSE COMMITMENT) THE PROBABLE EFFECT WOULD BE MERELY TO PUT THE USSR IN A SOMEWHAT STRONGER BARGAINING POSITION VIS-A-VIS PEKING. SUCH A DEVELOPMENT COULD BE SURVIVED BY THE U.S. WITHOUT SERIOUS INJURY, AND WITHOUT EVEN ANY DRAMATIC IMPAIRMENT OF U.S. RELATIONS WITH PEKING, UNLESS PEKING
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SUSPECTED THE U.S. OF COMPLICITY IN THE SOVIET MOVE. HOWEVER, IF TAIPEI (AGAIN CONTRARY TO EXPECTATIONS) WORKED OUT A DEAL WITH THE SOVIETS FOR MILITARY PROTECTION, THE ULTIMATE RESULT COULD BE TO FORCE THE PRC EITHER BACK INTO A POSTURE OF UNCOMPROMISING RELIANCE ON MILITARY FORCE OR INTO A REALIGNMENT WITH THE USSR IN ORDER TO "LIBERATE" TAIWAN. BOTH THESE VENTUALITIES CAN, WITH A HIGH DEGREE OF CONFIDENCE, BE AVERTED IF THE UNITED STATES IS CAREFUL TO AVOID SUGGESTING TO TAIPEI THAT WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE A GRC-SOVIET LINK EVEN OF A POLITICAL NATURE, OR THAT WE WOULD UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES CONTEMPLATE SHARING WITH THE SOVIETS OUR FORMAL DEFENSE COMMITMENT TO THE GRC.

8. WHILE THUS AVOIDING THE SUGGESTION THAT WE WOULD FAVOR OR ACQUIESCE IN A GRC-SOVIETLINK, WE SHOULD ALSO AS MUCH AS

WE CAN AVOID APPEARING TO ACCEPT ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR PREVENTING THE USSR FROM ASSUMING A UNILATERAL ROLE IN THE DEFENSE OF TAIWAN. FOR, AS THE PASSAGE OF THE SOVIET FLOTILLA THROUGH THE TAIWAN STRAIT IN THE SPRING OF 1973 SUGGESTED, IT WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT, SHORT OF THE USE OF FORCE, TO DISCHARGE ANY SUCH RESPONSIBILITY. THE U.S. ASSUMED ITS INITIAL DEFENSE COMMITMENT TO TAIWAN UNILATERALLY, AND THE USSR COULD IN THEORY DO LIKEWISE.

9. TAIPEI'S "SOVIET OPTION" ALSO IMPINGES ON US INTERESTS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE MANAGEMENT OF U.S. RELATIONS WITH THE PRC. THE PRC MUST BE AWARE THAT PUSHING THE U.S. OR TAIPEI TOO FAR TOO FAST TOWARDS ABROGATION OF THE DEFENSE COMMITMENT COULD CONCEIVABLY BACKFIRE BY CAUSING TAIPEI TO EXERCISE THIS OPTION. PENDING A SATISFACTORY PEKING-TAIPEI SETTLEMENT, PEKING IS ACCORDINGLY LIKELY TO TOLERATE THE U.S. DEFENSE COMMITMENT TO TAIPEI UNTIL: (A) THE SINO-SOVIET RELATIONSHIP HAS MARKEDLY IMPROVED, OR (B) TAIPEI HAS EITHER EXERCISED OR FORECLOSED ITS "SOVIET OPTION".

10. IMPLICATIONS OF THIS SITUATION FOR THE PACE AT WHICH THE U.S. SHOULD TRY TO MOVE TOWARD ESTABLISHMENT OF "FULL DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS" WITH PEKING ARE SOMEWHAT AMBIVALENT, BUT ON BALANCE, GIVEN CERTAIN ASSUMPTIONS, THE SITUATION SEEMS TO ME TO SUGGEST THE DESIRABILITY OF ACCELERATING THE PACE. TAIPEI'S SOVIET OPTION MAKES IT UNLIKELY THAT THE PRC WOULD INSIST OF ABROGATION OF THE US TREATY COMMITMENT AS A CONDITION FOR FULL NORMALIZATION; THEREFORE, ASSUMING REPEAT ASSUMING THE DESIRABILITY OF US-PRC NORMALIZATION WITHOUT ABROGATION OF THE US-TAIPEI TREATY, IT IS
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DESIRABLE TO HAVE NORMALIZATION TAKE PLACE NOT ONLY BEFORE THERE IS A SINO-SOVIET THAW, BUT ALSO BEFORE TAIPEI HAS EITHER EXERCISED OR FORECLOSED ITS SOVIET OPTION. NONE OF THESE DEVELOPMENTS IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER. HOWEVER, THERE ARE ENOUGH IMPONDERABLES TO DILUTE CONFIDENCE OVER THE LONGER RUN: THE DEATH OF MAO, THE DEATH OF CHINAG KAI-SHEK (WHOSE INFLUENCE HAS BEEN A FACTOR AGAINST TAIPEI-SOVIET TIES), THE POSSIBLE EVENTUAL EMERGENCE OF NATIVE TAIWANESE TO DOMINANT POWER IN TAIWAN, A SHIFT OF LEADERSHIP OR TACTICS IN THE KREMILIN.

1. WOULD THE PRC BE SO WARY OF PUSHING TAIPEI IN THE DIRECTION OF THE SOVIETS THAT IT WOULD REFUSE "FULL NORMALIZATION" EVEN IF WE OFFERED IT? POSSIBLY SO; WE HAVE NO SURE READING ON THIS ASPECT. HOWEVER, IF THIS IS PEKING'S POSITION, IT APPEARS TO US SHORTSIGHTED. PEKING IS SURELY AWARE OF THE CONTINUING FACTORS OF DRIFT TOWARD PERMANENT SEPARATION THAT ARE ACTIVE IN TAIWAN--BOTH ECONOMIC AND SOCIO-POLITICAL. THE NEED FOR US-PRC NORMALIZATION AS A SIGN OF FORWARD MOTION IN THE TERMS OF THE SHANGHAI COMMUNIQUE, AND A GOAD TO THE GRC, WILL GROW IN PACE WITH THIS DRIFT. AT THE SAME TIME, THE (NOW MARGINAL) POSSIBILITY THAT THE GRC WOULD REACT TO NORMALIZATION BY EXERCISING ITS SOVIET OPTION WILL ALSO BE GROWING. PEKING IS PROBABLY AWARE OF THE ANTI-SOVIET INFLUENCE STILL EXERTED BY CHIANG KAI-SHEK. TAIWAN'S CONSCIOUSNESS OF

DEPENDENCE UPON THE U.S. GUARANTEES IS STILL STRONG. IN THESE
RESPECTS, TIME IS AGAINST PEKING.
OSBORN

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